

The Builder.

No. CCCXXVI.

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1849.



THE summer weather is coming, with light mornings and long days, and our student readers will do well to avail themselves of it, whenever opportunities occur, to see all that is to be seen in their respective neighbourhoods, by which habits of observation may be formed, their store of knowledge increased, their taste formed, or their judgment strengthened. See all the best pictures, and the best buildings you can find: by accustoming the eye to what is good, it will soon be led to reject what is bad. When you have a leisure day, get off to some of the old churches near you, or to one of our noble cathedrals, and fill your sketch-book and your note-book with records of what you see and what you think. Make it an enjoyment; a relief from stricter study. Even without reference to the "good" that is to come from such jaunts, in the work-a-day sense of the word *good*, they give tone to the mind, fill it with pleasant memories, enlarge the store on which thought may afterwards draw, and invigorate the body.

And these are not trifles. As we have before now said, to make a good architect or a good builder is something; but to make a healthful, well-judging, virtuous, and happy man, is something more. Recreation is necessary for all; and it is most desirable that we should so tutor ourselves as to find this in pursuits which, so far from being hurtful, are advantageous as well as innocent.

When we took up the pen it was for the simple purpose of introducing to our readers a view of that extraordinary architectural production, ROSLIN CHAPEL, near Edinburgh; and we were led to make the preceding remarks by the recollection of the enjoyment which the jaunt to this very curious and interesting remnant of the fifteenth century had afforded us.

The vale of Roslin, a sequestered and beautiful spot, varied by wood and waterfall, is on the north Esk, and about 7 miles south from Edinburgh. The day was superb, our companions (one of the best of the modern Scotch song-writers, and a well-known sculptor,) abounding with information and good feeling, and the road so sequestered and romantic, that a notice, which we saw on a board in a hedge,—"Beware of thimblers and chain-droppers," seemed singularly out of place and uncalled for.

It is not our intention, however, to chronicle the journey, beyond alluding to a remarkable natural amphitheatre (forming part of the valley of the Esk), with a paper-maker's house at the bottom of it, and pointing out, as a warning to those who would design without constructive skill, a monument to James Lockart Wisheart, of Lee, which was built in 1790, and is passed on the road. This structure consists of four piers, enclosing a small square area, in the centre of which is the memorial. Four pointed arches connect the piers, and were to carry the covering, but having no abutment, and being constructed without reference to *statics*, they failed, and were a ruin before they were perfect.

Roslin Chapel (or Collegiate Church as it was), was commenced in 1446 by William St. Clair, Earl of Orkney. "Age creeping on him," says a MS. in Hay's Collections,* "made him consider how he had spent his time past, and how to spend that which was to come. Therefore, to the end he might not seem altogether unthankful to God, for the benefices received from him, it came in his mind to build a house for God's service of most curious work, the which, that it might be done with greater glory and splendor, he caused artificers to be brought from other regions and forraigne kingdomes, and caused dayly to be abundance of all kind of workmen present as masons, carpenters, smiths, barrowmen, and quarriers, with others. The foundations of this rare worke he caused to be laid in the year of our Lord 1446; and to the end the worke might be more rare, first he caused the draughts (or designs) to be drawn upon Eastland boards, and made the carpenters to carve them according to the draughts thereon, and then gave them for patterns to the masons, that they might thereby cut the like in stone. Because he thought the masons had not a convenient place to lodge in, near the place where he builded this curious colledge (for the town then stood half a mile from the place where it now stands, to wit, at Bilsdone Burne), therefore he made them build the town of Rosline, that is now extant, and gave every one of them a house and lands answerable thereunto."

The founder died in 1479, and left the building unfinished: the completion of it is attributed to the end of that century.

This chapel is an extraordinary combination of the massive and the minute, some of the parts being large and coarse, while the decoration over the whole is most elaborate and continuous. But for documentary evidence it would be ascribed to the following century, when Gothic ran mad; it is like nothing else,—cannot be classed,—and ought not to be imitated. Externally, some of the pinnacles have a Chinese aspect, and other parts are Indian; there are flowers carved on the face of the buttresses, and a semi-circular arched porch over the south door.

The character of the inside is conveyed by our engraving, which shews the east end of the building, with the aisle beyond.† All the parts, roof, jambs, strings, arch mouldings, are sculptured, and much of the carving is well executed and now in a good state, considerable works having been done there eight or nine years ago, at which time the east window (not seen in our view), was put in. The effect would have been better if, instead of this window being, as it is, one of the existing windows enlarged, and having consequently only one mullion, the opening had been more subdivided by tracery.

The vaulting of the aisles is received on straight lintels, which run from the main columns to the aisle wall. These lintels are all sculptured; one of them displays the Vices, with the Evil One looking on out of the jaws of hell. In the arches at the east end, where there is the greatest luxuriance of carving, the Dance of Death is represented.

At this end a striking peculiarity occurs, which has been already noticed in our pages.‡ The vaulting here terminates next the wall on large corbels of singular design, which

project to such an extent as to have led to the supposition that the east wall was pulled down after the groining was finished, and set further eastward, to give 3 feet more room, and that the corbels were then put in to prevent the necessity of pulling down the vaulting. We are not disposed, however, to coincide in this theory, but regard the arrangement in question simply as one of the many ingenious vagaries which distinguish this remarkable, and, in its general effect, beautiful building.

The "Prentice's Pillar," as it is called, with its sculptured decoration around it, is seen in our view,* also the entrance (to the right) to the crypt-like chamber at the east end, where, according to tradition, made current by Sir Walter Scott,

"Twenty of Roslin's barons bold
Lie buried, ———"

in their mail:—

"That chapel proud,
Where Roslin's chiefs unc coffin'd lie,
Each baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply."

Mr. Burn, the architect, disapproved the story in a degree by excavating both in this chamber and in the chapel. But those who are unwilling to give up the story suggest, that the bodies were placed on the ground, and not under it; and were carried off when the chapel was desecrated.

Nearly every stone in this chamber bears a "mason's mark," and in the chapel above, also, the marks are very numerous.†

Roslin Castle, with its strong walls, curious outer buttresses, and singular series of vaults, increased the pleasure of the visit: we returned by way of Lasswade; and it was light enough when we got back, to see the glorious picture which Edinburgh presents viewed from a short distance.‡

THE LATE MR. AUSTIN.

THE RESIDENT ARCHITECT OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

FOR many years up to about 1810, the cathedral of Canterbury had been allowed to run to decay, the only moneys laid out on the fabric being those barely sufficient to keep the roofs dry and the main walls from falling. Some of the most beautiful portions of the cathedral, as they became decayed, requiring more skill or outlay to repair them than was possessed by the director of the workmen, or was approved by the treasurer, were gradually swept away: amongst the latest destructions we may mention the beautiful turret, which surmounted the staircase of the north-west transept.

It was at this time that Mr. Austin, being a resident in Canterbury, suggested the absolute necessity of some repairs and works, in order to save the main fabric from falling into such a state as would endanger its existence; and by the praiseworthy exertions of the Bishop of Carlisle, then Archdeacon of Canterbury, the building was afterwards placed under his care, with directions for the suggested works to be carried out.

It would be impossible in the space of a short notice to recapitulate the various works found necessary and undertaken by Mr. Austin, or the many ingenious methods adopted to overcome the difficulties which surrounded

* The story (which probably every one knows), is, that the master mason, being unable to erect this pillar, went to Rome to see one of a similar description there. During his absence, his apprentice proceeded with the erection of it, and the master on his return found the column as we now see it. The story runs that envy led the master to kill his apprentice on the spot with his mallet. This story is told at other places besides Roslin, and is probably equally venacious at all.

† In connection with the subject of "mason's marks," Mr. Handyside Ritchie showed us, when in Scotland, a copy of an old document, dated 1598, purporting to be the charter of St. Mary's Chapel Lodge, Edinburgh, wherein the signature of every member is followed by his masonic mark.

‡ In "Britton's Architectural Antiquities," vol. III., will be found a ground-plan of Roslin Chapel, with views and details.

* Quoted by Mr. Britton, in a paper read at the Institute of Architects. See Vol. IV., p. 27.

† See p. 216 in present number.

‡ See p. 51 and p. 64, Vol. IV.